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SOURCE English Script for BBC Russian-Language Broadcast, 8 February 1951

The Communists of Eastern Germany are now going through a thorough purge of their Party from top to bottom. The purge began on 15 January and is to last six months. Preparations for it are known to have been going on since last July. It has been planned with characteristic "German thoroughness," but the plan has already gone wrong. And, as is also characteristic when "German thoroughness" goes wrong, the result is a flood of confusion, bewilderment, accusation and counter-accusation, order, counter-order, disorder.

The purge of the Communists of Eastern Germany takes the familiar Communist form of a "verification of Party documents." This is what happens to the ordinary Party member. He gets his call-up papers, with instructions to appear before his local "verification commission" on a certain day. He must get himself photographed and bring with him three passport photographs (3x4 cms.), with his name written on the back of each photograph in pencil. He must also write out in a legible hand and in ink a complete account of his past life and he must fill in on the form sent to him answers to questions about his "social origin"—"Who was your father?"—about his political activities before he joined the Party, whether he has ever at any time criticized the policy of the Soviet Union, whether he has ever had any kind of connection with Social Democrats in Western Germany or with anyone in any Western country and, in particular, if he left Germany for any Western country during the time of the Hitler regime.

Equipped with these documents, his new passport photographs and his old Party membership book, the German Party member presents himself at the appointed place and time and finds himself in a waiting room. He hands over his photographs and papers and waits outside until the board of five examiners has studied them thoroughly, together with all other information they have about him from his file in the Party records. He is then called in for questioning.

The cardinal question is his attitude to the Soviet Union. Does he recognize with conviction and enthusiasm that the Soviet Union is always right? Does he accept, without the slightest reservation, the new "frontier of peace" between Germany and Poland? Is there the slightest reason to think, by the hesitation or stammering in his answer, that he hopes Breslau and Stettin may some day be German cities again? Are there any deficiencies in his work as a Communist? Does he understand the supreme importance of Marx-Leninist theory, and does he study it with the thoroughness it deserves and demands? In his work in factory or office is he a model to all, continually increasing his output, setting himself new "norms," never by a single idle word or shrug of the shoulders expressing the slightest criticism of orders from the Soviet authorities?

Full notes are taken of the questions and answers, and they are put for permanent record on the member's Party file. When the interview is over, the member under examination is told to leave, and the five members of the examining commission discuss his case and recommend by majority vote whether he should be given a new membership book, or whether he should be reduced to the status of a candidate on probation, or whether he should be expelled from the Party altogether. This recommendation and all the relevant papers are then sent to a superior commission for the whole surrounding

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Kreis, which makes the final decision.

The total membership of the "Socialist Unity Party," as it is called in Eastern Germany, is 1.5 million, and there are 4,000 local examining commissions now in session. Each examining commission will therefore have to get through about 365 cases in the course of the six months allotted to the purge, an average of only about two per day. The examination is certainly going to be thorough, and it is already clear that the anxiety, alarm, confusion and mutual recrimination in the Party is intense.

There are 20,000 members of the local examining commissions, and 1,000 members of the superior district commissions. They were all subjected to an equally thorough examination, selection and course of instruction, under the direct supervision of the Central Committee of the Party, before the general purging operation began 15 January. The trouble is that after they were approved, appointed and instructed, the Central Committee was compelled by the seething disquiet in the Party to proclaim a radical change in their instructions. This happened on 10 January, only five days before the purge was due to begin. There is strong evidence that some members of the local examining commissions like the old instructions better than the new ones, and the whole Party is now at the mercy of rumors suggesting that the local examining commissions are sabotaging the purge by sticking to the old instructions and ignoring the new. In fact, say the alarmed and bitter rumors, the purgers themselves are narrow and fanatical sectarians who need to be purged first of all.

This is how it happened. The original instructions to the examining commissions were never published in full. They were a confidential document, only for the use of senior Party officials. (The fact that the BBC possesses a complete photostat copy of these instructions is just one more piece of evidence that the Party certainly needs purging very badly indeed.) These instructions are a document of first-class interest and very understandably confidential. The document, now in our possession, is a booklet of 23 pages, giving a list of the deviations which the examiners are to search for and expect to find among some Party members.

The list is remarkable: opposition to the campaign for increasing output in factories, organized agitation against the people's police, and an obstinate prejudice in favor of objective truth in university teaching (page 10); the rotten Social-Democrat idea that the elections in Western Germany are genuinely free elections, or the equally out-of-date idea of the old "Communist opposition" that former Nazis are undesirable allies for the Workers' Party (page 12); refusal to accept the recent official condemnation of those who have never forgiven Stalin for his pact with Hitler (also page 12); or, on the other hand, a continued belief in the Nazi doctrines of the superiority of the German race, in Germany's need for more lebensraum, and in the contemptible inferiority of all Poles and Russians (pages 13 and 14); and, finally, active agitation against the Soviet Union, including the spreading of illegal leaflets, and "notorious opposition to the Party of Marx and Lenin" (page 16). And all that in the very heart of the German "Socialist Unity Party," which has already been trying for at least two years to be a "genuine Stalin Party of a new type."

Needless to say, these parts of this booklet of instructions have not been published by the German Communists outside the confidential circle of the examining commissions. But other extracts from these instructions were published in the Communist newspapers in the Soviet zone of Germany on 17 December last year. These extracts repeatedly insisted that one of the main objects of the purge is to make the Party a real "Workers' Party," and to exclude "elements alien to the working class."

For example, here are some quotations from these instructions to the local examining commissions as they were originally published in the Communist newspaper NEUES DEUTSCHLAND on 17 December: "The investigation must show whether the member possesses Party consciousness and class solidarity.... It must pay attention to his class consciousness and his social origin.... Mistakes committed by the member must be judged in the light of his whole development, activity and social origin.... What is important is not whether he has been a model Party member in the past, but that on the basis of his origin, development, loyalty to the Party, honest endeavor, etc. there is a guarantee that he will become a model Party member in the future."

This very great emphasis on the importance of the Party member's social origin--"Who was your father?"--was finally rubbed in by two sentences which brought about a real explosion in the Party. Here are these two sentences: "Elements alien to the working class are people who by their origin and social position do not yet belong to the working class (Grossbauer, Unternehmer). In principle they do not belong to the Party." The reason why those two sentences caused such an explosion is that the German "Socialist Unity Party" is not and never has been a working class party.

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Last July, for example, at the last Party congress the number of delegates officially described as "workers" was only 38.7 percent of the whole. The Party chiefs complained that was not nearly enough. Three years before, at the Party congress in 1947, the proportion of "workers" among the delegates was 58 percent; so there was a 20 percent drop in "workers'" representation in the Party in those three years. The number of employers of labor, whether on farms or in factories, who joined the Party as a prudent measure of insurance is evidently large. The number of industrial managers and Party functionaries of anything but working class origin is considerable. And it is now clear that the Party cannot possibly survive without them.

These industrial managers and Party functionaries voted obediently last July for a resolution at the Party congress saying that "our chief object must be to see that the industrial working class always keeps the authoritative influence in the Party." No harm in voting approval of such a resolution--after all, the industrial working class never had had "the authoritative influence" in the German "Socialist Unity Party." The passing of hypocritical and meaningless resolutions breaks no bones. But it is quite another matter when 21,000 specially chosen fanatics are appointed to purge the Party, with instructions to deal sternly with everyone not of working class origin. So the Party rebelled, and rebelled successfully.

On 10 January, five days before the purge was due to begin, the Communist paper NEUES DEUTSCHLAND withdrew the offending two sentences, said that they were "mistaken" and quoted the constitution of the Party, which says that anyone can be a member "who accepts the aims and constitution of the Party, obeys its orders, works actively in one of its organizations, and pays his subscriptions regularly." So people of decidedly not working-class origin can still be good Party members, and ought not to be thrown out in the purge. But this change in the instructions to the local examining commissions only made the confusion all the greater. First of all, by no means all the embarrassing references to the members' social origin were cut out of the instructions; many still remain. Next, the 21,000 examiners were specially selected to carry out the original, unamended instructions. And there is certainly a vigorous minority in the Party which even now greatly prefers the original instructions.

There is evidence of this day after day in the columns of NEUES DEUTSCHLAND. We are told about German factory workers who have been saying: "Good, now at last we shall get rid of all the Party functionaries who are not genuine workers. Now at last we shall get rid of all these damned peasants. Now at last we shall have a real Party of the working class." Of course NEUES DEUTSCHLAND explains in its issues since 10 January that that is all a mistake. And local Party authorities, who have been too zealously preparing to carry out the old instructions in advance, are now being rebuked day after day in the columns of NEUES DEUTSCHLAND. For example, Comrade Stanzel, Secretary of the Party organization at Loeskenzien, was denounced on 18 January for having already drawn up a list of the members in his locality who, in his opinion, ought to be expelled from the Party. And the officials of the Party organization at Alt-Tellin are rebuked for having warned 61 comrades in their organization to mend their ways within two months, or else be expelled from the Party. Apparently they warned the wrong people, according to the very latest switch in the Party line.

What conclusions can one draw from all this? The "Socialist Unity Party," set up in the Soviet zone of Germany in April 1946, was a strange mixture of Stalin worshippers, Stalin haters, Hitler worshippers biding their time, careerists seeking power and profit and university professors wanting only to be left alone. But this curious Party has served the purpose of its founders very well. Supported by Soviet bayonets, it has been an instrument for eliminating all legal opposition to Soviet policies in Eastern Germany, and has secured a 99 percent vote for a single list of officially-approved candidates at an election on the best Soviet model. That was on 15 October last year. Once that objective had been reached, the time had come to purge and reorganize the Party into a thoroughly reliable monolithic Stalinist Party of a quite different type, for quite different purposes. That development, from the loose optimistic coalitions of the immediate postwar period to the fanatical dictatorship of the Stalinist minority, is typical wherever political power derives not from the people but from the Soviet Army. And sure enough, on 26 October, only 11 days after the 99 percent victory at the Soviet zone election, the Central Committee of the Party decreed the great purge, which has now begun with so much confusion and recrimination.

We said at the beginning that the Communists of Eastern Germany are now going through a thorough purge of their Party, from top to bottom. That is true in spite of the statement, on page 18 of the confidential instructions, that the Central Committee alone is not subject to any examination or purging. In fact, of course, the Central Committee will be very strictly watched and judged by the Soviet authorities. And the Soviet authorities can hardly escape the conclusion that the German Central Committee has bungled the beginning of its purge very badly.